

Morgan-Reeves Building
208-10 Public Square
Nashville
Davidson County
Tennessee

HABS No. TN-16

HABS,
TENN,
19-NASH,
9-

PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Architectural and Engineering Record
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. TN-16

MORGAN-REEVES BUILDING

Location: 208-210 Public Square Nashville, Davidson County, Tennessee
Latitude: 36°10'03" N. Longitude: 86°46'35" W.

Present Owner: Washington Manufacturing Company

Present Occupant: J. S. Reeves & Company

Present Use: Dry goods store

Statement of Significance: This building, among the earliest to be erected on Public Square following the fires of 1856, is a fine example of the richly decorated Italianate storefront in Nashville and may offer the first significant use of cast-iron elements in commercial buildings in the area. It was erected in 1856 by Samuel D. Morgan, who was instrumental in founding cotton and textile mills in Nashville and Middle Tennessee, and who served as chairman of the State Capitol Building Committee. Since 1897 the building has been occupied by J.S. Reeves & Co., another dry goods store.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Date of erection: 1856.
2. Architects: Warren and Moore. A lithograph of the building is labeled, "Mr. S.D. Morgan's Dry Goods Store... Built 1856. Warren & Moore Architect & Builders." The back of the lithograph reads "presented to the 'Tennessee Historical Society' by J. Meigs, Friday, Nov'r 27, 1857." Deposited in the Tennessee Historical Society's Miscellaneous files, 1688-1951. Box M2 - No. 105 M.
3. Original and subsequent owners: On October 18, 1853, Morgan & Co. (Samuel D. Morgan, R. H. Gardner, C. J. Cluney, and R. C. Gardner purchased at a public auction a "... certain ... parcel of land ... situated on the North side of the Public Square in the City of Nashville, being the same lot of ground formerly belonging to the estate of Thomas Crutcher dec^d and sold as part of his estate, said lot of ... forty two and one-half feet, more or less, and running back at right angles with the line of the Public Square one hundred and eighty-six feet ... lying between the house and lot of W. R. Elliston, occupied by Gardner Shepherd & Co., being the same lot of ground on which the _____ house stood & corner [of] which was occupied by Phillips & Hart, 1853, as a wholesale grocery [RODC Deed Book 26, p. 376].

On January 1, 1857, the remaining principals of Morgan & Co. (Richard H. Gardner, Robert C. Gardner, Charles J. Cluney, and St. Clair W. Morgan, the latter being Morgan's son) conveyed to Samuel D. Morgan their interest in the " . . . lot & parcel of ground situated on the north side of the Public Square in the City of Nashville on which is built the stone house known as number forty-nine, and at present occupied by Morgan & Co. as a wholesale dry goods store, bounded on the East by the building belonging to Wm. R. Elliston at present occupied by Gardner Shepherd & Co. as a shoe store and on the West by the store number forty-eight, owned by D. H. C. Spruce and other heirs of Jno. Eakins, deceased . . ."

On January 2, 1866, Morgan made James Whitworth Trustee and conveyed to him in trust his " . . . four story brick store house on the north side of Public Square in the City of Nashville, Davidson County, Tennessee NUMBER FORTY-NINE, fronting forty-one feet eight inches on the square & running back about one hundred & eighty feet, together with all the ground upon which said building stands & which is thereto attached, as well as the fixtures [sic] & furniture therein . . ." [RODC Deed Book 35, p. 477]. In 1876, Morgan gave his trustee power of sale in conveying a note on a debt to one Mrs. E. S. Gardner [RODC Deed Book 54, p. 63].

Following Morgan's death in June 1880, the Chancery Court for Davidson County, in its October 1881 term, ordered the sale of the " . . . store house on Public Square for [not] less than \$20,000 . . ." in settlement of the above debt [Chancery Court Minute Book 15, p. 77].

In June 1882, one Mary F. Drouillary purchased at a public auction ordered by the Chancery Court " . . . the large store house on the North side of the Public Square in the City of Nashville, known as the Samuel D. Morgan store, between College & Market Streets, and immediately between the rock front store on the West occupied by Adams Thron & Co. and the rock front store on the East built by W. R. Elliston, together with the lot on which said store house is situated . . ." [RODC Deed Book 74, p. 234].

The Morgan building finally passed into the hands of the Reeves family on February 6, 1897, when John P. and Anne E. White sold to Joe E. Reeves the "four-story brick store house known as the Samuel D. Morgan House, and being the property conveyed to Mary Florence Drouillary . . ." [RODC Deed Book 214, p. 242].

4. Original plans and construction: None known to have survived to the present day.

5. Alterations and additions: No written documents have been uncovered to make clear the performance of such work or when it might have been done.

A comparison of the above-mentioned engraving with the existing building reveals that the modillion cornice over the first-story storefront windows was boxed over and a sign placed there. No doubt at the same time the coping which surmounted the cornice was also removed.

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

It does not appear generally to be known in the community that the J. S. Reeves Building was originally owned by Samuel D. Morgan, where the latter housed his dry goods store. Moreover, the distinction of this individual in the history of Nashville seems also to have become somewhat obscured with the passage of time.

Morgan attained an eminent position in Nashville as the city's business and civic leader. One of the most prominent and successful merchants of Nashville, he founded the city's wholesale dry goods trade in 1837 by establishing the firm of Morgan, Crutcher & Co. Moreover, the cotton mill which he built in Lebanon about 1836 or 1837 was the first in Middle Tennessee, if not in the State. Just after the Civil War, he was also the principal figure behind the erection of the Tennessee Manufacturing Company, one of the best built mills in the south. Morgan is said to have planned the mill [Wooldridge, History of Nashville, Tennessee (Nashville, 1890), p. 628]. Although the community thought that he had built too large and expensive a mill, time showed that he had planned wisely [Jones, The City of Nashville, Illustrated (Nashville, 1890), p. 77].

Morgan has also been credited with having been the author of the charter of the first railroad in Tennessee, the Nashville and Chattanooga, which served as a model for all subsequent charters. When the Civil War broke out, Morgan was instrumental in providing the South with adequate munitions, inducing friends to undertake the manufacture of needed supplies and himself building a gun cap factory in South Nashville which made the caps first fired at the Battle of Manassas [E.C. Lewis, "Nashville's Pre-eminent Merchant and Manufacturer: Samuel Dold Morgan," The Merchant and Manufacturer, July (1914), p. 19.]

No doubt the most distinguishing of his civic ventures was his service as chairman of the State Capitol Building Committee. It was largely through his efforts that Strickland's design for the Tennessee State Capitol prevailed over more modest alternatives. It was also because of Morgan's efforts that the library was equipped and the grounds graded and landscaped. In appreciation of Morgan's services, the State voted that he should be interred in a niche in the south wall of the capitol.

In view of his varied and distinguished background in architectural affairs, it is not surprising that Morgan should have seen fit to erect a building of architectural distinction for his place of business. Although there is scant documentation to establish the fact, Morgan's store may well be among the first in Nashville to employ cast-iron elements; these consist of columns positioned on a regular structural grid on the first, second, and third floors, as well as the first story store-front, with its unusual hinged side panels on each of the pilasters.

C. Sources of Information

1. Early Views

Among the most valuable of such views is the one mentioned above by J.E. Wagner, Nashville lithographer. A similar, contemporary engraving is the one published in the Nashville City and Business Directory for 1860-61, Vol. V (Nashville: L. P. Williams & Co., 1860), p. 120, H. Bosse, engraver.

Another engraving is published in Andrew Morrison's The City of Nashville (Nashville, 1891?), p. 105. However, the engraving incorrectly depicts five stories instead of four. That this is the same building, however, is confirmed by the fact that the two adjoining buildings depicted therein are identical to those which appear in contemporary photographs (see next item below), as are the architectural details of the building itself and the engraving in question. As this is the only engraving to render a five-story building, the error must be attributed to the engraver.

A photograph of the building is published in J.S. Reeves & Co., Glimpses of Nashville, Tennessee (Nashville: E. W. Softley, 1901?), unpaginated.

2. Bibliography

a. Primary and unpublished sources:

County Clerk's Office for Davidson County, Tennessee, Will Books.

Register's Office for Davidson County, Tennessee, Deed Books.

Sherrod, Mrs. Amanda Morgan [S. D. Morgan's daughter].
"Morgan [A Genealogy]". On deposit at the Tennessee State
Library and Archives, Manuscripts Division.
Ref. Ac. No. 67-138.

b. Secondary and published sources:

"A Family of Soldiers. Distinguished Career of Major General John H. Morgan, His Brothers and Kinsmen in the Civil War," Supplement to the Sunday Argonaut, Lexington, Ky. Sunday, May 9, 1897.

Gilchrist, Agnes Addison. William Strickland, Architect and Engineer, 1788-1854 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1950), pp. 15-16, 108, 110.

Jones, Ira P. "The Dry Goods Market," in his The City of Nashville, Illustrated (Nashville: Publication by author, 1890), p. 77.

Lewis, E. C. "Nashville's Preeminent Merchant and Manufacturer," The Merchant and Manufacturer, XX, no. 7 (July, 1914), pp. 19, 43, 48.

Morrison, Andrew. "J. S. Reeves & Co.," in his The City of Nashville. The Englehart Series: American Cities, XXIV (Nashville, n.p., 1891?), p. 105.

Reeves, J. S. & Company. "J. S. Reeves & Company," in their Glimpses of Nashville, Tennessee (Nashville, Tenn.: E. W. Softley, 1901?), pages unnumbered.

Reeves, Joe S. "The Public Square." Paper deposited in the Old Oak Papers, at the Tennessee State Library and Archives, Manuscripts Division, Ac. No. 1081.

Wooldridge, J., editor. History of Nashville, Tennessee (Nashville, Tenn.: H.W. Crew, 1980), pp. 225-226, 628.

Prepared by: Anatole Senkevitch, Jr.
Architectural Historian
& Architect
National Park Service
Summer, 1970

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This building is a fine example of the richly decorated Italianate storefront in Nashville and may offer the first significant use of cast-iron elements in commercial buildings in the area.

2. Condition of fabric: Good.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The four-story building measures 41'-4" across its five-bay front x 183'-0" deep.
2. Foundations: Stone.
3. Walls: The 30" painted plaster common walls are apparently solid masonry.
4. Structural system: Post and beam.
5. Chimneys: One brick chimney remaining. Previously there were four.
6. Openings:
 - a. Doors: The two exterior main entry doors are wooden. One wooden panel below and a glass pane above.
 - b. Windows: Hoods over windows are supported by Corinthian brackets. The sills are supported by smaller brackets. The windows have one-over-one-light double-hung sash.
7. Roof: Flat roof, covered with pitch. Raked stone cornice supported by Corinthian brackets.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: The four floors and basement are open except for an enclosure at the freight elevator on the west wall near the rear of the building.
2. Stairways: The stairway to the basement and four floors is near the main entrance on the east wall. Another set of stairs to the basement is at the rear on the east wall.
3. Flooring: Asbestos tile over hardwood flooring; tongue and groove subflooring.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Painted plaster walls. The common walls are 30" thick.
5. Trim: The interior supports are cast-iron 7" diameter columns with Corinthian capitals. There are two columns sizes, 7" and 11" diameter at the base.

6. Hardware: Curious hinged cast-iron panels on each side of the columns at the main entrance.
7. Mechanical equipment: None. Modern heating (steam), lighting (some gas fixtures remain), and plumbing. The building was originally heated by four open wood-burning fireplaces per floor.

D. Site:

1. General setting: The building faces south toward the Public Square. A back alleyway provides a service entrance. The buildings west of this one were recorded by HABS as the Public Square Commercial Area, HABS No. TN-57.

Prepared by: Roy C. Pledger
Supervisory Architect
National Park Service
Summer, 1970

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was undertaken by the National Park Service in cooperation with the Tennessee Historical Commission and the Historic Sites Federation of Tennessee. Structures were measured and drawn in July, 1970, under the direction of James C. Massey, Chief of HABS, and Roy C. Pledger, project supervisor (Texas A & M University), Anatole Senkevitch, Jr., historian (University of Virginia), by student architects Donald W. Graham and William H. Edwards (University of Illinois), and Donna G. Woodrum and Robert J. Dunnay (Virginia Polytechnic Institute), at the Historic American Buildings Survey field office, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tennessee. The photographers was Jack E. Boucher of the HABS staff. The written data were edited by Alison K. Hoagland of the HABS staff in June, 1981.